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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Technical Meeting on the International
Year and the International Decade
of the World's Indigenous People
Geneva, 20-22 July 1994
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE

Information received from the United Nations system

GE.94-13091 (E)

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

[3 June 1994]
[Original: English]

1. FAO has not yet drawn up a programme of activities in support of the International Decade. Since, due to budgetary constraints, such activities would have to take place within existing resources, an indication of the programme areas where FAO has ongoing or is hoping to undertake new activities is given below.

Rural people's organizations

2. Within the framework of implementing FAO's Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development increased attention will be given to strengthening rural organizations that represent marginal farmers and indigenous groups. Activities are expected to involve, inter alia, the organization in selected areas of India and Brazil of national and local-level workshops as well as pilot project activities dealing with employment and income generation.

Rural land markets

3. FAO would be interested in collaborating in undertaking studies on the effects of rural land markets on access to land by indigenous populations and organizing an expert meeting on the topic, if funding were made available.

Nutrition

4. FAO will continue to support nutrition intervention programmes for vulnerable groups including indigenous people.

Genetic resources

5. FAO will continue to be actively involved in the implementation of Agenda 21's provisions on conservation and use of genetic resources and the Convention on Biodiversity. Many of these activities will involve indigenous people.

6. Plant genetic resources. The Fourth International Technical Conference for Plant Genetic Resources which FAO is organizing will take place in Germany in June 1996. Arrangements are under way for the preparation of a report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources which will consider, inter alia, the resources used by indigenous people and their role in conserving and developing these resources and also transmitting knowledge about the resources. Questions of access, transfer and benefit-sharing will also be addressed indirectly. Studies will be undertaken on both in situ and ex situ conservation. Many academic institutions and NGOs, including a number that represent and/or are actively involved with indigenous communities, will play an important role during the conference preparatory process and the conference itself.

7. Animal genetic resources. FAO will continue to develop its global information system for domestic animal diversity and its animal genetic conservation programme which will give particular attention, inter alia, to the animals of indigenous peoples. While FAO recognizes the importance of indigenous knowledge it does not at present have the resources to undertake studies in this field. However, it would be willing to cooperate with other United Nations organizations and national or international institutions in such an endeavour.

8. Fishery genetic resources. FAO is planning to develop means of tapping indigenous knowledge in this area in follow-up to the Convention on Biodiversity and the November 1992 FAO Expert Consultation on Aquatic Genetic Resources.

Fisheries

9. FAO is planning to undertake a series of case studies dealing with the comparative analysis of traditional fishery management systems in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Due to funding constraints these will take place over a number of years.

Forestry

10. The Forests, Trees and People Programmes as begun under the International Year of the World's Indigenous People will continue for the next few years.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

[11 May 1993]
[Original: English]

1. UNDP has already started the preparation and the mobilization of human and financial resources for a process of consultation with indigenous organizations and of raising the awareness of staff at the country offices about the often precarious socio-economic situation in which indigenous people live. This process will include: data gathering; national consultation; a regional workshop/consultation with indigenous organizations and United Nations agencies; and the preparation of concrete recommendations and project proposals for support to indigenous populations.

2. UNDP also has planned to finalize this year a publication entitled "Conserving Indigenous Knowledge - Alternatives to the Intellectual Property System". Following the publication of this study, UNDP will organize a few regional consultations with indigenous organizations that have an interest in this issue in order to discuss strategies for the preservation of indigenous knowledge and for ensuring that their communities benefit from the possible commercialization of this knowledge. In the longer term we hope to be able to fund concrete initiatives pursuing these objectives. We hope that other United Nations agencies will take an interest in these initiatives and participate in their implementation.

3. With reference to coordination of the Decade, we confirm UNDP's intention and strong commitment to take part in the discussion on the elaboration of a detailed plan of action and the establishment of a funding plan.

4. To ensure the success of the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People, it is in our view essential that (i) support for the United Nations system be coordinated; (ii) indigenous people get the opportunity to participate in all stages of the planning of the Decade; (iii) sufficient resources be raised for the Voluntary Fund; (iv) the management of the fund be as transparent as possible.

5. With regard to the coordination of support from the United Nations system, the Technical Meeting to be convened on 20-22 July is an important step. However, to avoid duplication and important gaps in United Nations system support for indigenous peoples, continuous monitoring will be required.

6. With regard to the participation of indigenous peoples in the planning of the Decade, in addition to their participation in the annual meetings of the Working Group, the following measures could be considered:

(a) Propose that the indigenous community select from among them regional focal points with whom you can collaborate and to whom you can report on a more regular basis;

(b) Distribute via, for example, e-mail, or through the United Nations country offices, monthly, or bimonthly newsletters with information concerning United Nations activities with and for indigenous peoples;

(c) Open a bulletin board on the Internet, accessible to indigenous peoples organizations and United Nations focal points for indigenous peoples. Perhaps the UNDP-supported Sustainable Development Network can play a supporting role in this.

7. The level of resources for the Voluntary Fund seems to be fundamental for the success of the International Decade. A high-level meeting with donor countries could be convened with a view to raising adequate funds. However, a satisfactory and transparent system for monitoring those funds should be in place beforehand. UNDP is pleased to offer the Centre every kind of support it might need for this. Given UNDP's decentralized structure and its experience with the management and monitoring of small-grants programmes, UNDP is well positioned to help the Centre, if needed, to manage a window within the Voluntary Fund for project proposals in the broader area of sustainable development and targeted to indigenous populations in the developing world.

THE WORLD BANK

[13 June 1994]
[Original: English]

1. The World Bank strongly supports the initiative to declare an International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, commencing on 10 December 1994. The present period devoted to planning the content and activities of the Decade is extremely important for a successful Decade. The World Bank is honoured to be invited to participate in the Technical Meeting which aims at creating a detailed plan of action for the Decade.

2. The World Bank established a "Bankwide Task Force on the 1993 United Nations International Year of the World's Indigenous People". Throughout the International Year, the Task Force participated in various inter-agency consultations. The Task Force organized various activities at the Bank during the International Year. On this occasion special reference should be made to a conference on "Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Development" that took place on 27-28 September 1993 in Washington. A number of invited indigenous representatives from Africa and Latin America discussed the topic of the conference with reference to local conditions and experiences. Case studies on indigenous participation and natural resource management were also presented and discussed in an integrated manner. The proceedings of the conference will be published shortly.

3. The international activities in the area of indigenous rights are growing steadily. The concerns of indigenous peoples are already an important concern in all of the Bank's regions, especially in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We are now seeing a gradual development whereby these concerns are becoming important within the various sectors. Indigenous concerns are also being taken into account in such areas as involuntary resettlement, participation, social assessment and natural resource management projects.

4. This relatively new development is in large measure correlated with recent work on the policy side. A case in point is the Bank's Operational Directive on Involuntary Resettlement that gives special consideration to indigenous peoples. In April of this year, the Bank's Task Force on Involuntary Resettlement presented its report "Resettlement and Development" that reviews all Bank-financed projects involving involuntary resettlement in the period 1986-1993. In discussing impoverishment and declining standards of living, the report states unequivocally that indigenous peoples are among the vulnerable groups that have more exposure to the risks of economic and habitat displacement, and that understanding the risks specific to different peoples helps explain how impoverishment occurs and what must be done to effectively avoid these risks in future operations.

5. Above all, there is the Operational Directive on Indigenous Peoples, which in essence says that a special Indigenous Peoples Development Plan should be prepared for all Bank-funded projects which affect the lands and cultures of indigenous peoples. While this Directive is considered sound and correct, operational staff in the Bank's regional offices often are at a loss as to how to apply the Directive to concrete project situations. In an effort

to respond to this lacuna, the Bank's Africa, Asia and Latin America Technical Departments are now embarking upon specific work aimed at applying the Directive, in a sense establishing guidelines for how to use the Directive. The work is taking a different shape, as well as proceeding at a different pace, in the different regions, reflecting in part different needs. The first results are expected next year.

6. The informed participation of indigenous peoples is increasingly being emphasized in the Bank's work. This is connected with the realization of the importance of local knowledge for cultural compatibility and long-term sustainability. It is also connected with the importance of creating some degree of local ownership and control over project activities. Currently, a Participation Sourcebook is being put together that aims at giving concrete guidance to operational staff on the various tasks and problems that may be encountered in planning projects that will affect local peoples. One chapter deals with indigenous peoples. Here, an effort has been made to be as direct and relevant as possible. Various topics focused upon include: (a) devising appropriate consultation procedures, (b) recognizing land and natural resource rights, (c) building upon subsistence lifestyles, (d) using indigenous institutions, (e) investing in culture and communication, (f) strengthening local capacity, and (g) financing indigenous development. It is expected that operational staff, as well as others involved with work affecting indigenous peoples, will find this chapter concrete and helpful, while at the same time not forsaking any of the existing cross-cultural complexity.

7. While the World Bank traditionally works in development aid by lending to its various Borrowers, the Bank does realize that funding is necessary for the many activities planned for the Decade. Towards this, the Bank's Small Grants Program is one potential source of funding for some of the Decade activities.

8. The Small Grants Program was created in 1983 to promote dialogue on international development issues. It aims at supporting a multitude of different causes. Any institution concerned with development can apply for a grant; however, nearly all grants are awarded to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Applications from developing-country institutions are especially welcome. During fiscal 1993, US$ 500,000 was disbursed to 43 different organizations around the world, including 33 based in developing countries.

9. Grants are intended to support activities that promote discussion and dissemination of information on a broad range of development issues of interest to the World Bank. It is preferred that these small grants catalyse contributions from other sources. Examples of activities that received grants in fiscal years 1993 and 1994 include: (a) an international indigenous people's conference on "Protection of the Treasures of the Ancestors" (Aotearoa, New Zealand), (b) participation of indigenous people's groups in the 11th Inter-American Indian Congress (Managua, Nicaragua), (c) a regional seminar on "The Health of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon Region" (Lima, Peru), (d) a seminar on indigenous adult education in rural areas (Panajachel, Guatemala), and (e) an "International Conference on Indigenous Peoples and Water Resource Development Projects" (Montreal, Canada). Indigenous peoples' organizations are especially encouraged to consider whether the Small Grants Program might be of interest to applying to for any specific Decade activities

they would like to realize. A more detailed description and application procedures for the Small Grants Program can be received by writing to:

Ms. Kris Martin
Small Grants Program
External Affairs, The World Bank
1818 H. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433 USA
Fax No: (202) 676-0574
Tel. No: (202) 473-1767

10. The momentum that was built up during the International Year will now be channelled into the Decade. The World Bank compliments the United Nations on its decision to establish the Decade, and will follow the coming process of the detailed planning of the Decade, as well as the Decade itself, closely.

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

[2 May 1994]
[Original: English]

1. Suggestions for activities in the Decade. Activities that, by general consensus of those consulted, could have lasting beneficial effects include: conducting a survey evaluating experiences of national government institutional machinery for dealing with the needs of indigenous peoples; forming a professional network of specialists in development involving indigenous peoples as social actors, with special emphasis given to the recognition and incorporation of professionals who are themselves members of indigenous groups; organization of a seminar concerning the state of the art in "ethnodevelopment" and its practical implementation in participatory development projects by and for indigenous peoples; carrying out an evaluative survey of recent and ongoing experiences of ethnodevelopment involving participatory projects based on indigenous institutions and cultures as resources to be strengthened and as bases for self-development by indigenous peoples with international resource assistance; holding of a conference of institutions of the United Nations system aimed at perfecting each agency's proposals for its contribution to ethnodevelopment and at promoting complementarity and cooperation among agencies.

2. ECLAC is currently holding internal discussions aimed at establishing its contribution to the kinds of activities proposed above for the International Decade.

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL FOR
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

[25 March 1994]
[Original: English]

ESCAP does not have field offices in the countries of the region, no national-level consultations are being contemplated. Along broader lines, however, ESCAP would suggest that the Centre for Human Rights might wish to organize a public awareness campaign concerning the Decade and its goals. Particularly valuable in the Asian and Pacific context in any such awareness campaign would be a clarification of the concept of "indigenous people", as the identification of "indigenous" versus other social groups, as you may be aware, has been a most vexing problem in this region in the past.